



# Department of State Police

## General Order

Effective Date	June 17, 2013	Number	ADM-34A
Subject			
Social Media/Networking			

### Policy

The personal use of social media can have bearing on departmental personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by Department of State Police Employees.

When using social media/networking, Department Employees (sworn and civilian), should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain.

Department Employees should also be mindful to treat Department of State Police business as confidential per Rules and Regulations Article 5.

### Definitions

These definitions are evolving as social media, networking, and internet usage and capabilities evolve as well.

*Social Media and Networking:* Are categories of internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. They are online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others professionally, personally, or informally. The interface is conducted through posts or speech via a range of technologies such as computers, cellular phones, and tablets to name a few.

*Social Media:* A form of electronic communication through which users create online communicated to share information that may include, but are not limited to: personal messages, videos, photo and video sharing sites, blogs, micro blogging sites, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, You Tube, Pinterest, Instagram, and Snapchat.

*Networking:* An exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions that may include, but are not limited to: the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business, networking sites, podcasts, as well as comments posted on a site, message or discussion boards, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Jobster, Craigslist, and MyWorkster.

*Post:* Contents an individual shares on a social media/network site or the act of publishing the contents on a site.

*Speech:* Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

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**Supervisor Responsibilities** Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that employees under their command comply with the provisions of this policy and address violations as soon as possible.

**Responsibilities of Employees** In accordance with Department Rules and Regulations and Policy and Procedures, Department Employees using social media/networking applications shall:

- Use appropriate discretion in their reference to the Department and not discredit themselves or the Department;
- Be aware that speech and/or related activities on social media/networking sites may reflect upon them in their official capacities and/or upon the Department, and act accordingly;
- Be cautioned that speech, on or off-duty, may form the basis for disciplinary action under current law;
- Be aware that privacy settings and social media/networking sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected;
- Expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the Department at any time without prior notice;
- Not divulge information gained due to their authority; and
- Not make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this Department without express authorization.

Department Employees should use common sense in all communications, particularly on any social media/networking site. An examination of the facts could potentially result in an internal personnel investigation. Employees are responsible for anything you write or present online. Some examples of prohibited action may include, but not be limited to:

- Speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule regardless of the intent to malign, disparage, threaten harm or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals; and
- Speech involving themselves or other Department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless, irresponsible or unprofessional.

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**Responsibilities of Employees (Continued)**

Department Employees should exercise care if they choose to post personal information on the internet. Some activities in an employees' personal life may impact job performance, the performance of other employees, and/or interests of the Department. Once information is posted, it is accessible by anyone, indefinitely, and such information may result in unintended consequences, such as:

- Limiting future career opportunities e.g., undercover, covert operations, or attainment of a security clearance;
- Manipulation by defense counsel to undermine or impeach an employee's credibility or integrity, hindering a successful prosecution; and
- Being viewed, altered, printed and redistributed by other internet users including criminal organizations.

Department Employees, who choose to identify themselves as an employee of the Massachusetts State Police whether explicitly, implicitly, or visually, shall:

- Be considered to be publicly representing the agency in a professional manner from that period forward while still employed by the agency; and
- Be responsible for all content published on their individual social media site(s).

**Creation of Media Application**

Colonel/Superintendent shall approve in writing before the creation of any:

- Website, page, fan group or other application of social media using the Department as the basis of such application. Examples may include, but are not be limited to:
  1. Creating a website or fan group dedicated to Massachusetts State Police;
  2. Creating an identity using a username such as Massachusetts State Police, MSP or any term associated with the Department.

Department Employees shall

- Not publish Commonwealth or Department images of intellectual property using social media without prior approval from the Colonel/Superintendent, e.g., photos of sworn personnel in uniform, marked agency vehicles, videos of training or operations exercises, compilation videos of personnel, vehicles, or equipment, electronic artwork of the State Police patch or seal; and
- Not create an identity, website, page, fan group or other application of social media using the Massachusetts State Police as the basis of such a creation without prior approval from the Colonel/Superintendent, e.g., creating a website or fan group dedicated to Massachusetts State Police, using "Massachusetts State Police" or "MSP" in a username.

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#### **Violations**

Department Employees shall notify their immediate supervisor when they become aware of:

1. Any personal identifying information of themselves on the internet in violation of this policy; or
2. Have knowledge of a posting and/or website in violation of the provisions of this policy.

Any sites deemed inappropriate, bringing discredit to the Department and or employees, and promoting misconduct whether on or off duty shall be:

- Investigated either through a criminal or administrative investigation.

#### **Investigative Activities**

Department Employees shall:

- Not conduct any activity related to ongoing investigations through their personal social networking accounts.

#### **References**

Department Rules and Regulations  
Department Policy and Procedures

Promulgated By:

## **5.20 CIVIL ACTIONS**

If any member shall bring a civil action, or directly or indirectly commence negotiations for settlement for damages for personal injuries incurred while in the performance of his/her duty, s/he shall immediately notify the Colonel/Superintendent, through channels and in writing, and file with the Colonel/Superintendent copies of any complaint(s) or allegation(s), and any notification of settlement(s), and also the final disposition of the action or negotiation.

## **5.21 RESIDENCE**

Members shall reside within the territorial boundaries of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Any change regarding a member's domicile or mailing address, shall be reported immediately, in writing, on a change of address form, to their supervisor who shall forward same to the Director of Human Resources.

## **5.22 TELEPHONE**

Members shall, at all times, provide to their duty assignment supervisor a telephone number or numbers allowing for direct access and immediate contact.

## **5.23 DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION**

- 5.23.1 The intent of this section is to protect the members and the Massachusetts State Police against wrongful dissemination of information or its commercialization and is not intended to prevent distribution of legitimate news through proper channels.
- 5.23.2 Members shall treat official business of the State Police as confidential. Information regarding official business shall be disseminated only to those for whom it is intended, in accordance with established Procedures.
- 5.23.3 Members may remove or copy official records or reports from a State Police installation only in accordance with established Procedures.
- 5.23.4 Members shall not divulge the identity of any person(s) giving confidential information, except as authorized by his/her supervisory member or proper authority.
- 5.23.5 Members shall not make known any proposed action or movement of the State Police, or the contents of any Order or Directive, to persons not immediately concerned with its execution.
- 5.23.6 Members shall not comment for publication, nor be interviewed, nor make public speeches on police business, except by permission of the Colonel/Superintendent. Requests for talks, interviews and public speeches shall be directed to the Colonel/Superintendent through the Public Information Section.

- 5.23.7 No member or civilian employee shall make any type of "records inquiry" either orally, in writing, electronically, or through computer except upon official police business. The results and contents of such checks shall not be disseminated to any person or entity except in conformance with law and Massachusetts State Police Policy and Procedure, and in the course of official police business. A "records inquiry" includes obtaining information found in the records of the Registry of Motor Vehicles, and records and information available through NLETS, NCIC, CJIS, court, probation, conviction and corrections records wherever found, Massachusetts State Police records, and any other database or case records management system maintained for law enforcement or public safety purposes that is not accessible to the general public.
- 5.23.8 Members shall not, directly or indirectly, seek notoriety through the public media.
- 5.23.9 Members shall not, directly or indirectly, publicly criticize or ridicule any official action of the Massachusetts State Police or any member.
- 5.23.10 Members shall not directly or indirectly represent the Massachusetts State Police, nor identify themselves as a member of the Massachusetts State Police, when expressing opinions on matters outside the scope of their employment.

#### **5.24 INTERVENTION**

- 5.24.1 Members shall not intervene in investigations being handled by other members or by other governmental agencies unless ordered to intervene by a supervisory member or proper authority or where the situation and circumstances warrant such intervention.
- 5.24.2 Members shall not undertake any investigation or other official action not part of their regular duties without obtaining permission from their immediate supervisor unless the exigencies of the situation requires immediate Massachusetts State Police action. In that event, their action(s) and the reason(s) therefore shall be reported as soon as possible to their immediate duty supervisor or proper authority.

#### **5.25 ABUSE OF PROCESS**

Members shall not knowingly make untrue statements or accusations at any stage of an administrative hearing, civil proceeding or criminal proceeding, or process or application leading thereto.

#### **5.26 USE OF EQUIPMENT**

- 5.26.1 Members shall utilize Massachusetts State Police equipment only for its intended purpose and shall not willfully or through neglect, abuse, spoil, damage, lose, or wrongfully dispose of Massachusetts State Police equipment.
- 5.26.2 Members shall be liable for the replacement of any Massachusetts State Police property damaged, lost or destroyed by negligence or misuse.
- 5.26.3 All Massachusetts State Police equipment issued to members shall be maintained in proper working order.